

# Board of County Commissioners

## Workshop

Date of Meeting: October 14, 2003

Date Submitted: October 8, 2003

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Parwez Alam, County Administrator  
Vincent Long, Assistant County Administrator

Subject: Workshop and Tour on the Status of the County's Emergency  
Medical Services (EMS) Program

### **Statement of Issue:**

The purpose of this workshop and tour is to provide the Board with an update on the status of the progress to date of the implementation of the Leon County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Program.

### **Background:**

On June 24, 2003, the Board voted unanimously to create a County-run Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department to provide emergency medical and transport services to the citizens of Leon County. On July 8, 2003, the Board unanimously approved a County-run EMS Department Implementation Plan and preliminary budget (Attachment #1). Staff is well into the process of accomplishing all of the numerous milestones of the EMS program to ensure successful transition of these services to the County effective January 1, 2004.

### **Analysis:**

To insure the timely implementation of the County EMS program, the County Administrator established an EMS Implementation Team to coordinate these numerous issues. This workshop item presents the Board with a status update on the significant progress that the County has made on the major components of the EMS system implementation.

### **Extension of TMH Services:**

The County's first priority in this process was to insure that EMS services to this community continued without interruption. To that end, on July 8, 2003 the Board approved the contract with Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare, Inc. for the extension of EMS services at a cost of \$133,000 per month. The Contract also provides for early termination should the County EMS Department become operational before December 31, 2003.

**Medical Direction:**

On September 23, 2003, the Board of County Commissioners approved the contract for Medical Direction of the Leon County EMS Department. Dr. Javier Escobar was the unanimous choice of the selection committee and is superbly credentialed in the field of emergency medical services. Dr. Escobar has already begun performing reviews of medical protocols, medications inventories, and required medical supplies and equipment.

**Paramedic/EMT and 24/48 Staffing Configurations:**

The most important component of a highly performing EMS system is the emergency medical employees. As per Board direction, the current staff of TMH's EMS will be afforded preferential hiring as the County builds the department.

The staffing of the County EMS department will be predicated on the staffing analysis contained within the Consultant's Model which are based on state and national best practices. The "best practices model" calls for a teaming of a paramedic and an EMT with twenty-four (24) hours on duty and forty-eight (48) hours off duty. However, both the paramedic and EMT configuration and the 24/48 staffing pattern are subject to modifications as deemed appropriate by the EMS Director based upon hiring patterns (preferential status of TMH EMS personnel), call volumes, and intensity of care requirements. As with other county programs, the Board will be fully apprized of major service level of services and service delivery issues.

**Personnel Issues:**

The Human Resources Division contacted employers that the County uses for salary benchmarking purposes to establish appropriate position and salaries in the EMS Department. The counties surveyed include Alachua, Collier, Escambia, Lake-Sumpter, Lee, Manatee, Okaloosa, Pinellas and Wakulla. Salary ranges and job titles have been established for positions of the EMS Division. In keeping with established Board direction, the salaries for these positions are budgeted at 5% above market. Considering salary and County benefits, this employment package is expected to be highly competitive in the industry.

The job classifications established are:

- Emergency Medical Technician
- EMS Dispatch Watch Commander
- Paramedic I
- Paramedic II
- EMS Staff Assistant
- EMS Shift Supervisor
- EMS Quality Improvement & Education Manager
- EMS Operations Manager
- EMS Director

All of the above EMS positions have been advertised beginning on August 10, 2003, with a closing date of October 10, 2003. The Human Resource Division, as of September 25, 2003, has received over 400 applications for all of the above EMS positions. A breakdown of the number of received applications, by position, is included as Attachment #2. Interviews for the various positions will begin to take place during the week of October 13, 2003, with the exception of the EMS Director position. Due to the importance of getting an EMS Director on board as soon as possible, on September 15, 2003, a Personnel Selection Committee was established to begin interviewing candidates for this position. Interest in the EMS Director position has been high with applications having been received from around the country. This position will remain open until filled.

#### **Risk**

The Risk Management component of this program is being carefully evaluated. Human Resources is working with the County's insurance broker as the many specifics of the program become known. Once these variables are substantially completed, an application will be made to secure appropriate coverages.

#### **Communications and Dispatch:**

Emergency 911 calls to the Leon County EMS Program will be dispatched by the Leon County Sheriff's Office (LCSO), per the Board's direction of June 24, 2003. County EMS will be utilizing the City/County owned 800 MHz system for its primary dispatch. The State of Florida Technology Office was invited to the LCSO to review the proposed changes to the Leon County EMS Communications Plan and in a letter dated September 4, 2003, Communication Engineer Randy Pierce stated that all proposed changes will be compliant with current statutes (Attachment #3).

The following is a list of all completed milestone in the implementation of the LCSO EMS Dispatch Center:

#### **Radio System:**

- At their September 18, 2003 meeting, the Management Oversight Committee (MOC) of the 800 MHz system approved the movement of EMS radio equipment from the TNT tower site (currently rented space) to the 800 MHz site on Bannerman Road.
- The additional dispatch console needed to facilitate EMS is expected to be delivered from Motorola the first or second week of October.
- Application for two Radio Frequency (RF) control station licenses is in process.
- Application for the transfer of TMH UHF radio licenses to LCSO is in process.

#### **Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD):**

- The TMH CAD license has been transferred to LCSO and technical support has been purchased.
- The ProQA software (emergency medical dispatch question and answer software) has been purchased.

**Personnel:**

- Applications have been received, interviews made and all six new LCSO Dispatch positions will be filled by the first week of October.

**Training:**

- All of the Communication Officers have been CPR trained.
- To date, twelve Communication Officers have been trained and certified for Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD). The second class of 12-15 will be held in October and a final class will be held in November to complete the training.
- All Communication Officers are scheduled to be HIPAA trained by the end of October.

**Dispatch equipment:**

- The 911 equipment move from TMH to LCSO has been ordered through Sprint. Current plans are to move the equipment in phases. This will allow one answering position at TMH to remain operational while the equipment for LCSO is being moved, installed and tested. The last position will be moved upon transition.
- The four additional computer workstations needed to facilitate EMS have been purchased.
- The 25 flat screen monitors needed to modify dispatch space and expand the EMS function have been purchased.

In summary, the six positions granted to LCSO to facilitate the EMS dispatch have been or are in the process of being filled. To date, enough EMD training has been completed to facilitate the EMS dispatch, and all EMD training will be completed by November, 2003. All of the radio equipment needed to facilitate EMS dispatch has been purchased and all of the software needed to facilitate EMS dispatch on January 1, 2004, has been transferred and/or purchased. To date, the total dollars spent or encumbered on Communications/ Dispatch equipment and software is \$128,420.

**Billing and Collections:**

At the September 23, 2003 meeting, the Board authorized staff to negotiate with Advanced Data Processing, Incorporated (ADPI) and Emergency Pro (DocuMed) for the provision of billing and collection services. Staff is currently finalizing these contracts and anticipates the vendors beginning work shortly. As has been previously reported to the Board, the County EMS budget is predicated on improved billing collections over what has been historically realized by TMH (Attachment #4). While the County's revenue estimates are conservative, this is an area which will be a focus of continuous improvement.

**Administrative Licenses Completed and/or In Progress:**

The following is a listing and status of the licenses and/or permits required for Leon County to commence EMS Services:

1. State and Federal Clinical Laboratory Licensure Application - Completed
2. Department of Health, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (DOHEMS) Operations Permit. This application requires a number of different items including a listing of the Ambulance equipment by VIN number, a medications and medical supply inventory, a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, the Medical Director's Drug Enforcement Agency's schedule B drug permit showing the Leon County EMS Location, and an approved trauma treatment protocols. All items have been completed or in process. It is anticipated that application for this permit will be completed and submitted by October 30, 2003. - *Ongoing*
3. Applications for Medicaid and Medicare Provider Status. A requirement of these applications is that Leon County has first secured a permit from the DOHEMS. Also required are the satisfaction of the CMS and state Electronic Data Transfer requirements by the County's Billing and Collections vendor. We are completing all other requirements so that the applications may be filed upon the satisfaction of these requirements. - *Ongoing*

### **Stake Act**

It is very important to note that the Medicare and Medicaid programs fall under the provisions of the Starke Act which appears as Section 1128B(b) of the Social Security Act. The Act makes it a criminal offense to:

"...knowingly and willfully offer, pay, solicit, or receive any remuneration directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, in cash or in-kind to any person to induce such person to refer an individual to a person furnishing or arranging for the furnishing of any item or service for which payment may be in whole or in part under any federal healthcare program, or to purchase, lease order, or arrange for or recommend purchasing, leasing, ordering any good, service, or item for which payment may be made in whole or in part under a federal healthcare program, shall be guilty of a felony".

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) has a longstanding and clear concern that such arrangement, for the provision of free goods and services to an actual or potential referral source are suspect and may violate the anti-kickback statute if one purpose is to induce or reward referrals of federal healthcare program business (Attachment # 5).

Given that it is anticipated that an estimated seventy (70%) percent of the projected revenue of the EMS program will come from federal health funding sources, staff is highly cognizant of the Starke Act and its prohibitions. The County EMS program will be implemented and operated in close cooperation with both of the hospitals in our community. However, especially in the area of EMS facilities, staff will be giving great consideration to avoid any Stark provision prohibitions.

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**Schedule for Construction of EMS Facilities:**

After receiving the Board's direction to create a County-run EMS Department, staff immediately began the process of identifying potential locations for a departmental headquarters. After a thorough analysis, including the utilization of professional EMS consultant services (Jay Fitch and Associates), staff determined that the County-owned Miccosukee Road location was the optimal site for the new EMS headquarters. This determination was based on a number of key factors including:

- Ownership: the site was already County owned,
- Location: the site is amply situated between the two hospitals, on the corner of the Blair Stone Road Extension and Miccosukee Road, allowing for easy multi-directional access.
- Economy: the identified Miccosukee Road location is also home to the new, expanded fleet facility, the County's fuel depot, Purchasing Division and the Public Work's Complex. These factors allow for economies in regards to ambulance repair, stocking of medications and equipment, fueling of vehicles and training, shower and locker space.

Working with the EMS consultants, staff crafted a plan for a headquarters facility that would serve as a central relief facility for EMS operations as well as all EMS administrative functions. This plan includes the following key components, all at the Miccosukee Road site:

- A 2,800 sq. ft. modular EMS HQ building: including all EMS administrative offices, shift change areas for staff, two showers, MIS designated space and a modest conference room.
- Logistical ambulance re-supply area: 2 secured bays of the new Fleet Management building designated for the restocking of EMS vehicles, including a 900 sq. ft., air conditioned facility to store medications and other temperature-sensitive supplies and to house logistics personnel and over 1,500 square feet of additional storage space for other EMS supplies. The ambulances will enter this covered and secured area for the re-stocking of supplies, medications and other logistical support services.
- Secured, electric-supplied ambulance parking: Twelve designated spaces for the parking of "ready to roll" ambulances that have been re-stocked but are not in the field. The electrical plugs at these spaces can be plugged into vehicles to keep them air conditioned while idle. This also includes a security system for the area including camera monitoring.

In addition to these features, the new EMS headquarters will also have generated power backup sufficient to supply each of the new EMS facilities. This site will also have fuel supplies and a designated EMS vehicle mechanic onsite and access to conference, training and locker facilities at other buildings in the complex. The permits for these EMS facilities, as described above, have recently been approved by the City. It is estimated that these facilities will be fully constructed and ready for "turn-key" operation by the beginning of December for a cost of approximately \$500,000.

There is also programmed space at the Miccosukee Road location for a site-built, 5,000 sq. ft. EMS headquarters facility. This proposed building space was conceptually designed by the

County's EMS consultants to provide administrative and operations office space, including areas for community conferencing and outreach, sufficient to meet the Department's projected growth over the next 20 plus years. This site could also function as an operational center during times of natural disaster. Once given the Board's approval for this building, it is estimated that it would take 20 months to design, permit and construct this building. Staff will bring an agenda item to the Board this fall that requests further direction on this facility.

**Schedule for securing EMS post space:**

TMH currently utilizes five fixed post locations at strategic positions across Leon County. During peak hours, TMH may also utilize three additional post spaces. Each of these post space locations were identified by TMH administrators over time, based upon thorough analysis of call reports and system utilization data. Post spaces afford paramedics and EMTs that work 24 hour shifts a location to rest during the non-active periods of their shift. Each post space is furnished and includes bathroom and shower facilities, rest areas (chairs, tables, and television), kitchen with cookware and bedding.

Of the five current primary posts: one is located at TMH EMS headquarters, one is co-located with a City of Tallahassee Fire Station and three are leased apartments or hotel rooms across the community.

Of the three current peak posts: two are co-located with City of Tallahassee Fire Stations and one is a leased apartment near FSU.

Staff has begun the process of assuming the existing TMH post space model, including the current distribution of the posts. This assumption of TMH's post space model includes analyzing the costs of assuming TMH's apartment leases and extending the existing Memorandum of Agreement between TMH and the City of Tallahassee Fire Department (TFD). Extending this agreement would allow County EMS staff to have access to TFD stations during their downtime. Staff will bring an agenda item to the Board this fall for approval. This item will outline all of the issues associated with an EMS post space system.

**Purchase of EMS Vehicle Fleet**

During the summer, staff worked with TMH administrators to negotiate a price for acquiring selected TMH EMS vehicles. At their meeting on September 24, 2003, the Board approved the acquisition of the 13 TMH EMS vehicles (11 ambulances, one disaster truck and one Supervisor vehicle) that were identified by staff for \$178,000 and directed staff to negotiate a formal contract for this purchase (to be effective December 31<sup>st</sup>). Those vehicles, if purchased new, would have cost the County an estimated \$1.1 million. The final contract for the acquisition of these vehicles is still being negotiated and will likely be presented to the Board for their approval in early November.

The County has also recently purchased four new ambulances. These new ambulances will replace four TMH ambulances that are not suitable for acquisition by the County. Those vehicles were delivered during the week of October 13<sup>th</sup> and are ready for use on January 1<sup>st</sup>. The County will also sign all of the newly acquired EMS vehicles with the new County logo as they become available. Staff is currently in the process of identifying local vendors for this purpose and will bring this issue before the Board for approval this fall.

**Equipment and Uniforms:**

Staff has worked with TMH officials to identify all available TMH EMS equipment for acquisition by the County, including radios, stretchers, Life packs, splints, restraints and other materials required on all ambulances. On August 21<sup>st</sup>, the County Administrator requested that TMH consider donation of these materials to the County or for a reasonable consideration thereof. TMH has yet to finalize their response to this request, but staff will continue to work with them on this key issue. Relatedly, staff is currently in the process of purchasing ambulance-based and hand-held radios for EMS staff.

Staff is also in the process of establishing purchasing agreements for oxygen and other necessary medical supplies, prescription medications and all other related EMS equipment and supplies in advance of December 31<sup>st</sup>. The EMS Medical Director is developing a comprehensive list of medications, medical equipment and related supply inventory requirements. The readiness of this equipment and supplies in advance of January 1<sup>st</sup> is a top County priority. EMS, Purchasing and other County staff are also currently engaged in identifying vendors for these supplies. Arrangements for the purchasing the required equipment and supplies are being made through the County's purchasing department according to existing County purchasing guidelines.

The County will also be providing uniforms for EMS staff. The preliminary plans include the leasing of nine sets of pants and shirts for each Paramedic and EMT. In addition, the County will provide employees with the official County EMS patches, protective-toe shoes, winter jackets and rain-wear with safety reflective material.

**Status of City Fire ALS First Responder Proposal:**

As directed by the Board, County staff has worked diligently with City staff to develop an agreement for the respective commissions' consideration on ALS First response provided by TFD in the unincorporated areas of the County. Negotiations with City staff were progressing very successfully to the point that all issues were substantially agreed upon at the staff level. County staff was awaiting a final version of a contract from the City when we were informed recently that serious union issues arose that could seriously impact the City's ability to provide this service. On October 8<sup>th</sup>, City staff presented an update to the City Commission on the progress of this issue. At that time, the City Commission directed staff to attempt to resolve the issues and report back to the City Commission.



Given that time is a critical factor in the implementation of this program, staff is readying to provide this component of service by the County, consistent with the overall service delivery of this EMS model. Staff will bring back details to the Board for consideration at such time that this becomes necessary.

**Tour of the TMH EMS Facility:**

TMH staff will be providing the Board with a lunch and tour of the TMH EMS headquarter facility during the workshop at 12:30 p.m. (Attachment #6)

**Tour of the County's new EMS Headquarters Facility:**

Staff will be providing the Board a tour of all of the Miccosukee Road EMS headquarter locations during the workshop at 2:00 p.m.

**Options:**

1. Accept the findings presented in this workshop packet.
2. Do not accept the findings presented in this workshop packet.
3. Board direction.

**Recommendation:**

Option #1

**Attachments:**

1. County-run EMS Department Implementation Plan and preliminary budget
2. Breakdown of the number of received applications by position
3. State of Florida Technology Office Letter
4. EMS Approved FY03/04 Budget
5. OIG Memo
6. EMS Workshop Schedule